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COMMITTEE ON THE EXERCISE OF THE INALIENABLE
RIGHTS OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 224th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Friday, 15 November 1996, at 10:30 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. KA (Senegal)

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The meeting was called to order at 11.15 a.m.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

1. The agenda was adopted.

OBSERVER STATUS FOR SOUTH AFRICA

2. The CHAIRMAN informed the Committee that the Permanent Mission of South Africa had expressed the desire to participate as an observer in the work of the Committee.

3. He would take it that the Committee wished to admit South Africa as an observer.

4. It was so decided.

5. Mr. GUMBI (Observer for South Africa) said that South Africa shared the Palestinian people's goal of trying to restore dignity and independence to Palestine. South Africa, which believed that peace was essential to development and prosperity, would do its utmost to ensure that the Committee was successful in its endeavours.

6. Mr. AL-KIDWA (Observer for Palestine) welcomed the admission of South Africa as an observer and hailed the valiant struggle waged by the South African people to build a democratic country free from discrimination and apartheid. He was confident that the Committee would receive the utmost cooperation from South Africa. He hoped that the admission of South Africa would encourage States from other geographic regions to join the Committee during the current session.

7. Mr. FARHADI (Afghanistan) expressed the hope that South Africa would soon become a full member of the Committee. Like the Observer for Palestine, he hoped that the current session of the General Assembly would see a much needed expansion in the membership of the Committee.

8. Mr. ABDELLAH (Tunisia) said that the granting of observer status to South Africa symbolized that country's commitment to the fundamental principle defended by the Committee, namely, the right of people to self-determination, in particular, the right of the Palestinian people to establish its own state in its own homeland with Jerusalem as the capital. He endorsed the previous speakers' comments on the need to expand the membership of the Committee.

DRAFT REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY (A/AC.183/1996/CRP.2)

9. Mr. CASSAR (Malta), Rapporteur, introducing the draft report of the Committee to the General Assembly (A/AC.183/1996/CRP.2), said that the draft had been approved by the Bureau of the Committee. Briefly summarizing the contents of the report, he drew attention to the fact that chapter IV had been prepared in the light of new developments which had taken place since the previous report. The main body of the report was in chapter V, which gave an account of the action taken by the Committee. Chapter VI contained a number of comments

proposed by the Bureau with regard to the status of implementation of mandates under General Assembly resolution 50/84 C, while the last chapter, VII, contained the draft recommendations of the Committee. He trusted that the report could be adopted by the Committee at the current meeting for submission to the General Assembly.

10. The CHAIRMAN suggested that the Committee should consider the draft report chapter by chapter, and then section by section.

11. It was so decided.

12. Chapters I, II, III, IV and V of the report were adopted.

Chapter VI

13. Mr. CASSAR (Malta), Rapporteur, proposed the following amendments to chapter VI of the report.

14. In paragraph 113, the words "expresses its concern" were to be replaced by "notes", and the words "should have been strengthened rather than diminished" were to be replaced by "should be strengthened"; in paragraph 118, the words "with regret" were to be deleted; in paragraph 129, the words "cannot fail to note" were to be replaced by "notes"; and in paragraph 130, the words "might assist" were to be replaced by "has already been initiated and should assist". He also proposed the addition of the following two new paragraphs after paragraph 130:

> "[130 bis] In the light of this need, two meetings were held during the period under review between members of the Bureau and senior officials of the Department. Constraints imposed by diminished resources have influenced the review of all the programmes which fall under the responsibility of the Department, including those related to the question of Palestine. It was noted that more regular consultation between the Committee and the Department would be beneficial in identifying the most efficient manner to utilize existing resources in order to implement all aspects of the resolution during the current biennium."

> "[130 ter] The Committee welcomes the Chairman's report on his discussions with the Department of Public Information and the assurance that he has already put in place a process of close cooperation and consultation between the Bureau of the Committee and DPI to prepare the information programme for the coming year."

15. Mr. AL-KIDWA (Observer for Palestine) commended the Rapporteur for his work in producing the report. The forthcoming thirtieth anniversary of the occupation of the Palestinian territories should give added impetus to the Committee's work for the full implementation of the rights of the Palestinian people.

16. Serious concerns remained, however, that General Assembly resolution 50/84 C had not been fully implemented. In particular, the clause requiring the Department of Public Information to cooperate fully with the

Committee had not been fulfilled, notwithstanding the recent efforts by the Chairman and officials of DPI. He agreed that the amendments proposed by the Rapporteur reflected the current situation, but wished, nevertheless, to offer some suggestions.

17. In the second line of paragraph 130, "might" should be replaced by "should". In the second sentence of paragraph 130 bis, the phrase "those related" should be replaced by "that relating". Paragraph 130 ter should be amended to read "The Committee welcomes the Chairman's report about his discussions with the Department of Public Information and the assurance that he has already put in place a process of full implementation of the relevant General Assembly resolutions in full cooperation and coordination between the Bureau of the Committee and DPI to prepare the information programme for the coming year."

18. Mr. ABOUL-MAGD (Observer for Egypt) said that his delegation had already made it clear in other venues that it was not satisfied with the implementation of the relevant resolutions, and it had found the original language used in the draft report to be accurate and unbiased. However, it would defer to the delegation of Palestine, which was prepared to accept the proposed changes in the wording of the relevant paragraphs.

19. In paragraph 130 bis, as suggested by the Rapporteur, the second sentence, which mentioned the issue of constraints imposed by diminished resources, did not seem to be in the proper context. It appeared to be a statement of fact, but it was without specific attribution. In the third sentence, it should also be made clear that regular consultations had been requested by the Committee.

20. Mr. CASSAR (Malta), Rapporteur, said that the mention of resource constraints had been an element of the outcome of the negotiations and was part of the explanation of its performance given by DPI. Although the financial situation of the Organization was a well-known fact, it bore repetition because of its political implications in order to make it clear that the financial restrictions were having a direct and immediate impact on programmes mandated by the General Assembly. The statement was not ascribed to a specific party because it had been a point of convergence in the discussions between the Committee and DPI. Since it was now possible to say that both parties were requesting more regular consultations and cooperation, the phrase "by both parties" could be inserted after "it was noted" in the last sentence.

21. Mr. AL-KIDWA (Observer for Palestine) said that "noted" should be replaced by "agreed", to reflect the promising mood of the discussions.

22. Mr. ABOUL-MAGD (Observer for Egypt) suggested that the second and third sentences could be combined to make it clear that the mention of the resource constraints was an outcome of the meetings, and not a statement either by the Committee or the Bureau.

23. Mr. CASSAR (Malta), Rapporteur, said that the phrase "in which it was acknowledged that" could be inserted after "Department", and that the two sentences could thus be linked.

24. Mr. ABDELLAH (Tunisia) said that it was his understanding that programmes were mandated in General Assembly resolutions and the appropriate credits were then allocated for their implementation. The mention of budgetary constraints implied that there were insufficient financial resources in the budget for the biennium to meet the allocations; he requested clarification on that point.

25. Mr. QADRUD-DIN (Department of Public Information) said that there was indeed a distinction between allocations and the amounts actually in the budget as approved. The funding received by DPI for 1996 had shown a 27 per cent decline; a similar decline was being taken into consideration in planning for 1997.

26. Mr. AL-KIDWA (Observer for Palestine) said that he considered the word "acknowledged" inappropriate, since it implied acceptance of the idea that financial difficulties had been the reason for reductions in the programme. He was not convinced that that had been the reason.

27. The CHAIRMAN said that the Rapporteur, the representatives of Egypt and the Department of Public Information and the Observer for Palestine would meet to finalize the text.

28. Chapter VI, as orally amended, was adopted.

Chapter VII

29. Chapter VII was adopted.

30. The draft report as a whole, as amended, was adopted.

OTHER MATTERS

31. The CHAIRMAN informed the Committee that the Bureau had decided that adjustments were needed in the language of the proposed medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001 for subprogramme 1.7, Question of Palestine, of programme 1, Political Affairs (A/51/6 (Prog. 1)). The necessary adjustments would be communicated to the Chairman of the Fifth Committee as soon as possible.

32. Mr. AL-KIDWA (Observer for Palestine), referring to the draft resolutions to be introduced in the General Assembly concerning various matters relating to Palestine, said that the draft resolutions on the question of Palestine relating to the work of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and of the Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat should read essentially as they had in the past. The draft resolution on the work of the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat should reflect the draft report just adopted in a positive light, given the new promising activities of DPI, and should call for the full implementation of the programme for Palestine in the coming year. The draft resolution on peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine should be updated to reflect the actual situation on the ground: the peace process faced great difficulties, the parties were under an obligation to implement the agreements that had been reached and the social and economic situation of the Palestinian people had deteriorated

sharply. He also believed that the addition of the concept of statehood in that draft resolution would be of great benefit.

33. He expressed the hope that the draft resolution on the natural resources of the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, and other occupied Arab territories to be adopted by the Second Committee would be sponsored by many members of that Committee.

34. The draft resolution on the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination before the Third Committee currently had 63 sponsors, including many delegations which had not sponsored similar resolutions in the past, including the delegations of Japan and 14 States members of the European Union, among which was an important political development. He hoped that even more delegations would become sponsors before the draft resolution was put to the vote and that it would be adopted virtually unanimously in that Committee and in the General Assembly.

35. The issue of settlements in the occupied Palestinian territory, which had traditionally been dealt with in part in the omnibus resolution relating to the report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories, should receive the attention of the international community in a separate resolution at the current session, in the light of the increasing danger posed by the decision of the Israeli Government to renew colonial settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territory, which posed a danger to the peace process.

36. The Observer Mission was currently engaged in negotiations with the States members of the European Union regarding the draft resolution on revenues derived from Palestinian refugees' properties, and he expected that the entire package of draft resolutions relating to the work of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East would receive the affirmative votes of the members of the European Union.

37. It was his hope that the other draft resolutions relating to Palestine to be adopted by the General Assembly would reflect the political and practical realities of the prevailing situation in the region, and he looked forward to the continued solidarity of the members of the Committee with a view to the early attainment by the Palestinian people of their inalienable rights.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.